7:Lewis S-5 (ca. 1940-45) 1948 MD1 Syria MD1

area. The English merchants who passed through the hills in 1678 noted that Jebel Bil'as was "covered with Trees, which, for the most Part, were the small *Pistacho*'s which the *Arabs* pickle with Salt; but eaten green, are good to quench Thirst"; and in 1691 they ascended a ridge to the east of Jebel Bil'as where the tree cover is now sparse and found it "cover'd on both Sides with great plenty of Turpentine-Trees," which grew "very thick and shady," several of them "loaded with a vast Abundance of a small round Nut."[15]

In spring, when surface water is available and the pasture is excellent, the hills are full of flocks; and several hundred thousand sheep, together with some goats and camels, pasturing each year for about three months cause much damage. Bedouin and peasant shepherd families burn vegetation on the spot, and woodcutters from Selemiya and the villages cut large amounts of the valued slow-burning pistachio wood. Vegetation has been destroyed in these ways since prehistoric times, but at certain periods the process has been quickened. Between 1914 and 1918 the Turkish authorities took great quantities of wood as fuel for the railroads. Local notables say that within living memory trees extended beyond Aquerbat; that is, several miles into the country now cultivated and treeless. The westernmost range, Jebel Shomariye, has lost all its woods, and a ridge to the east, which was "overgrown in some places" with terebinth trees in 1908,[16] is today bare. A new danger to the soil of the hills has resulted from the high grain prices now prevailing, the growing population pressure in the region, and the tendency of Arab tribes to settle down to agriculture; for now increasing areas of land on the western fringe of the hills are being plowed.

Malaria control on the plain must clearly be accompanied by soil conservation in the hills, and, ideally, both should be part of a larger scheme of regional rehabilitation. Such a scheme would cover, among other matters, irrigation, malaria control, vegetation conservation, farming practices, and grazing rights. It would mean radical changes in the region; it would require a large capital outlay; and it would necessitate government action of a scale and vigor practically unknown in Syria. It is impossible to discuss here whether such a scheme would be economically justifiable, or possible within the present social and political framework. One can only emphasize that some such comprehensive action must eventually be taken if the problems of the region are to be solved.

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[15] "An Extract of the Journals" (*op. cit.*), pp. 132 and 143 [Miscellanea Curiosa, pp. 123 and 137–138].
[16] Alois Musil: Palmyrena, *Amer. Geogr. Soc. Oriental Explorations and Studies No. 4*, 1928, p. 44.

11: Hourani S-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria MD1

PART TWO

III. THE PROBLEM OF WESTERNIZATION

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AT this point it will be convenient to interrupt the narrative and to analyze the problem which first presented itself to the Syrians in the nineteenth century, and which underlies the political difficulties with which they are faced in the present generation.

This problem can be stated very briefly. An old way of thought and life, which has gone unchallenged and fundamentally unchanged for some hundreds of years, finds itself in some ways opposed, in others inescapably transformed by the new civilization of the West.

In consequence, the Syrians find themselves no longer living in a united and coherent world, but torn between two worlds, neither of which is altogether their own. How will it be possible for them, by preserving or modifying the old and accepting what is new, once more to form a unified world of thought and life which they can call their own?

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At the beginning of the nineteenth century Syria formed part of a world which had a civilization of its own: a religion, a culture and a way of life. It was a unified civilization, in which every sphere of life was regulated by a system of generally accepted principles, themselves drawn from religion and from immemorial custom. This civilization may be called 'Arabo-Islamic', because its main characteristics were derived, with much borrowing from outside and with many adaptations to the peculiar conditions of Syria, from two main sources, themselves closely connected with one another: the Islamic religion and the life of the Arabian desert.

179

'Islam' means resignation, and the Moslem, the adherent of Islam, is he who resigns himself to the will of God: not in the sense of passive and fatalistic acceptance of anything which may come, but in that of the complete and voluntary submission of man's will to God's commandments. God is unique, the Creator of the Universe, all-wise and all-powerful; He has revealed His will to man, in a measure sufficient for all the purposes of life, through a long succession of Prophets, who include Moses, Jesus, and finally Muhammad, the Arabian of the seventh century, to whom was given the final revelation

11: Hourani 5-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria MD1

Islamic world had been much affected by influences from the Mediterranean countries, from Persia and from India. It had had the power to assimilate the products of other civilizations, and also to extend its dominion over peoples alien to the Arabs in origin and way of life. But later it ceased to develop and either to give out or to receive influences; and although the stream of influences from the West never completely vanished, during the great days of the Ottoman Empire it was smaller and less effective than it had previously been and was again to become.

II

In the past century or more this Arab world has been shaken to its foundations by the impact of the West. Western ideas, learned from schools, from books and latterly from the cinema, have changed at least the externals of social life. The competition of Western goods has broken the old crafts and opened up new economic possibilities. New means of communication are breaking up the closed local community; the life of the Beduin is threatened by the motor-car, the aeroplane and the extension of civil authority. The administrative machinery which the modern Government commands, and the extension of the limits of its action, are making the old feudal and sectarian organization unnecessary and even impossible. New Western rulers have imposed themselves, who have not even so much claim to be obeyed or such deep roots in popular memory and habit as had the Ottoman Sultan. The new social, economic and political life has in its turn shaken the domination of Moslem jurisprudence; and men have begun to raise new questions of the adequacy of religious faith and loyalty as a basis for society, and the place of Islam in the modern world. A new world has revealed itself, which strikes at the very foundations of the old, and is indeed its exact antithesis.

The transformation of the old life has brought with it a number of difficulties and dangers. The Arabs, like other peoples in their position, are torn between two ways of life. Sentiment, tradition and the belief that there is something of value in their tradition make them unwilling to break entirely with the old civilization, even if that were possible. But at the same time the necessities of modern life, and often a conviction that the Western civilization is in some ways

178 182 better than their own, impel them to accept certainly the economic technique of the West and possibly much more.

This self-division between two ways of life is full of inconveniences. It may produce an abnormal tension of mind and nerve in the individual, and temporarily obscure moral and aesthetic standards. What is more important, it may stifle the creative energies of an individual and a people, and make it difficult for them to speak with their own voice and think their own thoughts. On another level, it is almost inevitable that the process of change should be attended with great economic dislocation, as the old crafts die out; with social unrest, as the introduction of new economic processes brings in its train a new relationship of the social classes; and with political instability, since it takes time to learn the art of constructing and managing a modern Government. Among the educated classes the tension may result in a profound melancholy and a paralysis of the will: the qualities which haunt the world of the Russian novelists of the nineteenth century.

178 The dislocation and difficulties have been particularly great for two reasons. The first is that the change has left no part of life untouched. It is a complete upheaval both of the Arab mind and of Arab society. Secondly, it is not a single change of which the force will sooner or later spend itself. It is the introduction of a dynamic principle by virtue of which one change prepares the way for another, and no end to the series is perceptible. The change is not from one static position to another, but from a static community ruled by custom to a dynamic society, moulded and governed by positive laws and by a conception of individual, social or national welfare.

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182 It may be that the difficulties will so press upon the Arabs that they will accept self-division as inevitable and give up the attempt to reconcile the new and the old. If that happens, they will become Levantines.

To be a Levantine is to live in two worlds or more at once, without belonging to either; to be able to go through the external forms which indicate the possession of a certain nationality, religion or culture, without actually possessing it. It is no longer to have a standard of values of one's own, not

11: Hourani S-4 (no date) 1940 MD1 Syria #101

the towns is scarcely above subsistence-level. In most parts of the country the huts of the peasants, made of wattle or mud-brick or in parts of stone, contain nothing but the barest necessities; and the greater part of the population live on a diet of bread, olive-oil, milk and perhaps fruit and vegetables in season. Famine is rare, and has not occurred on a large scale since the First World War; but malnutrition is very widespread. On account of this and of the absence of sanitation and the scarcity of doctors in the country districts, the standard of health is also low. Malaria, typhoid, trachoma and other diseases are endemic. The standard of living is highest in Beirut and the Christian parts of Lebanon, which have profited greatly from the savings and experience of the emigrants to the New World.

6

The changes in the economic system are beginning to cause far-reaching changes in the whole social structure. In the larger towns the externals of life are almost wholly modernized. Clothes and foodstuffs, the construction and furnishing of houses and methods of transport all approximate to those in use in Europe. The old externals it is true still linger on; the camel and the motor-car jostle one another in the streets of Damascus. But it is generally recognized, and on the whole without regret, that it is only a matter of time until the old completely disappears. In the small towns and villages of the Christian portions of Lebanon, too, the process of Westernization in externals has gone far. In the smaller towns and countryside of the interior, the change is slower in coming; but motor-cars and roads have prepared the way for it.

The fundamental social forms, however, are slower in changing. The dominant social class is still that of the landowners, who continue to possess a semi-feudal status. No other social class is strong or self-conscious enough to stand against them. The cultivators have little effective power of moving from one estate or region to another; although intelligent, they are too unenlightened to have much effective sense of grievance or capacity for political or economic combination. Only in parts of Lebanon does there exist a considerable number of free and comparatively enlightened smallholders. As yet there is neither an industrial middle

class of importance nor an organized urban proletariat (although there are the beginnings of a trade-union movement). There does, it is true, exist a large commercial middle class in the towns, but it is not an autonomous class capable of challenging the social power of the landowners. For this there are a number of reasons: many of the merchants are Christians or Jews, and therefore frightened of coming into conflict with important vested interests; many are bound by family ties to the landowners, and not conscious of a difference of interest from them.

Although the power of the landowners has not yet been challenged, almost certainly the coming generation will see its decline. The conditions which made it possible are ceasing to exist. Land is no longer the only source of wealth, nor is subsistence-agriculture by ignorant peasants the only practicable means of using it. The landlords have lost not only their economic but also their political function: their services as leaders of a feudal army and as tax-collectors have long since been dispensed with. It is not yet clear, however, which class will take their place. The processes which have taken place in parts of Europe—the transfer of power from landowners to capitalists, and the division of large estates into small freeholdings—may occur, but it is not necessary and perhaps not altogether desirable that they should. It is at least arguable for example that it would be better, economically and socially, to revive and develop the village community than to try to create a class of small farmers. Whether this be so or not, it is certain that great changes in the structure of classes are to be expected.

7

Again, the patriarchal family system remains in existence, but its days are probably numbered. The claims of the family are still prior to those of the individual member of it; but its solidarity is gradually being undermined by the ways of modern urban life and by the emergence for large sections of the population of alternatives to the cultivation of inherited land in the ancestral village.

The structure of the family is being radically transformed by the change in the status of women. The change is particularly great among the urban middle class. Girls' schools have been opened, and it is possible for women to

11: Hourani S-4 (no date) 1946 MDI Syria 101

enter an ever-increasing number of occupations, including the liberal professions. But so far only the edge has been touched of the great problem, which like all great problems in this country is closely bound up with religion: how far is it possible in a modern society to retain the traditional Islamic view of women's status—seclusion and the veil, the theory and in a minority of cases the practice of polygamy, the divorce laws and so on? Of all the difficult questions which the process of Westernization raises, this is perhaps the most difficult; and its difficulty and urgency are likely to increase. The process of change is being speeded by one manifestation of Western civilization above all: the film which expresses a way of feminine life, and a conception of the relations between men and women, which are far from those prevalent in the Islamic world.

The local and sectarian loyalties of the past also preserve something of their strength, but on the whole they are declining in force and are likely to continue to do so, with the spread of Western ideas, the introduction of new means of communication and above all the development of schools, in which the adherents of different religions grow up side by side.

8

The growth of education is indeed one of the most important, as it is one of the most obvious, changes of the last few generations. Landowner, merchant and peasant alike are eager to send their sons and daughters to school, as the first and essential step towards entering the free professions or Government service. Syria and Lebanon now possess the framework of a complete educational system, from elementary schools up to technical institutes and three universities: the American University of Beirut, the Jesuit Université de S. Joseph, also in Beirut, and the State University, in Damascus.

The table on page 94 shows the number of schools of different types, and of scholars in them, in 1938.

From these figures it will be clear that education is further advanced in Lebanon than in Syria. It is also further advanced in the mainly Christian districts of Lebanon than in the others; among the Christians of Syria than among the Moslems; and in Syria as a whole than in Jebel Druze and Latakia. The percentage of literacy is probably rather

14:International Bank S-5 (1954)1955 MD1 Syria MD1

CHAPTER 1 *STRUCTURE OF THE SYRIAN ECONOMY AND ITS DEVELOPMENT*

Introduction

Syria, although an independent country only since 1945, has had a long and chequered history. It has seen many conquerors and witnessed the rise and fall of many civilizations. Since time immemorial it has been the frontier land where rival civilizations penetrating from the East and the West have contended for supremacy. The Sumerians, Chaldeans, Assyrians and Persians came from the East, and the Greeks and Romans from the West. Still later the Eastern Roman Empire of the early Christian era gave way, successively, to the Arabs and the Turks. Even after Turkish rule became firmly established, Syria remained for a long time the place where the caravans from the West and East met and an active trade in goods took place. Although it became basically eastern in its orientation, it was never wholly without contact with the West, and western influence was again reasserted when Turkish rule was terminated after the first World War.

Thus the culture, economy and political system of Syria are a mixture of East and West. The diverse elements have only been partially fused. The East and West co-exist in rather uneasy balance. Modern technology has invaded Syria in the form of factories, mechanized farms and motor cars, but the craftsmen still ply their trade in crowded bazaars, most of the land is still cultivated by time-hallowed methods and under ancient systems of tenure, and camels and donkeys still play a role—although a diminishing one—in transport. Modern commercial banks have by no means displaced the traditional money lenders and the bazaar banks or *sarafs*, and the wholehearted acceptance of western capitalism is still impeded to a small extent by the Moslem aversion to interest as usury. Democratic, parliamentary institutions have been borrowed from the West, but their stability is periodically threatened by divisive forces and the tradition of autocratic rule inherited from the past. Syrian nationalism, born as a rebellion against foreign domination, is now engaged in the

14:International Bank S-5 (1954) 1955 MD1 Syria MD1

101 178 challenging task of fusing the positive elements of both its eastern and its western heritage into a cohesive whole.

Population and Land

161 162 According to official estimates, Syria at the end of 1953 had a population of about 3.65 million, including some 150,000 Bedouins who lead a nomadic or semi-nomadic existence. Although demographic statistics are far from adequate, it appears probable that the population has been growing at an annual rate of somewhere between 2% and 3% during the last decade. Most of the population is rural:[1] about 60% live in villages and towns of less than 10,000 inhabitants, and each of the two largest cities—Damascus, the capital, and Aleppo, the commercial center of the country—has a population close to 400,000. About 86% of the population are Moslem or belong to offshoots of the Moslem religion, and nearly all of the balance are adherents of a considerable number of Christian denominations.

161 311 As a country with an area of 181,337 square kilometers (72,234 square miles), about three-fourths the size of the United Kingdom, Syria cannot be said to be densely populated. While less than a third of the area is cultivable, the proportion of the population to the land already under cultivation compares favorably with that of other countries in the Near and Middle East. In Syria there is one hectare[2] of cultivated land per inhabitant, or about 10% more than in Turkey and Iran, twice as much as in Greece and Iraq and eight to nine times as much as in Egypt.

311 133 There is still plenty of land available in Syria but water severely limits its utilization. The country lies to the leeward of mountain ranges in the west and north which intercept much of the rainfall. Except for the coastal region of Latakia province, Syria is largely cut off from the rain-bearing winds of the Mediterranean by mountains, the Djebel Ansariya (Alaouit mountains) in Latakia, and, farther south, after the intervening Tripoli-Homs gap, by the twin ranges of the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon which in turn give way to the Hermon range. Thus the area which can support rain-fed cultivation is confined to a rather narrow belt extending roughly like a crescent from the Hauran in the south northward to Aleppo and then eastward along the Turkish frontier. Fortunately for Syria, its

[1] See Annex C, p. 292.

[2] A hectare = 2.471 acres.

15: Khadduri S-4 (no date) 1951 MDl Syria MDl

Arab heritages, equipped with knowledge, aware of its duties and obligations, working for the general welfare, imbued with the spirit of collaboration and fraternity among all citizens." (Article 28.) To achieve these ends the State undertakes to supervise all educational institutions in the country and to formulate programs to be applied in the various stages of training. The State alone has the right to grant and to standardize school certificates. Further, a Board of Education is to be set up to formulate educational policy and plans, the composition and functions of which are to be defined by law.

Military service is compulsory, the justification being that the defense of the country is a "sacred duty" and that the Army is the guardian of the Fatherland. The family is the basis of society and is to be protected by the State. The State protects and encourages marriage and endeavors to remove the material and social obstacles which hinder it.

The transitional provisions of the Constitution specify that within ten years from its coming into force illiteracy must be eliminated from the country. Another provision relates to the formulation of a plan for the gradual settlement of the tribes.

Finally, the Constitution stipulates that no amendment is to be made for two years. Thereafter the Constitution may be amended either by a proposal from the President with the approval of the Cabinet and Parliament if one-third of its members submit an application to this effect. Parliament will then consider the proposed amendment; if approved by an absolute majority, it is considered approved as a motion. If it is rejected, the rejection is final and no application for the amendment of the same article can be submitted again for one year. Six months after the adoption of a motion in favor of amendment, Parliament can begin to discuss the proposed alteration. A two-thirds majority is required for approval.

APPRAISAL

The Syrian Constitution of 1950 clearly reflects the influence of both the new European constitutions and the recent course of Arab nationalism. The socialistic trends reflect a realization of the need of rebuilding the social-economic system, which had

15: Khadduri S-4 (no date) 1951 MDl Syria MDl

been long neglected owing to the preoccupation of Syrian nationalists with the more urgent political problem of achieving independence. When independence had been achieved, the Nationalist regime failed to command respect because of its reliance on the oligarchic and feudal groups held over from the old Ottoman period. It was still necessary, once the leaders of the national regime were overthrown, to adopt new social and economic measures before a truly democratic system of government would come into being. These socialistic provisions, however, are not of a Marxist nature, since they maintain almost intact the principles of private property and free enterprise.

One would expect a strong Arab nationalist tinge to the constitution of the country which had been, from the very beginning of the nationalist movement, the hot-bed of Pan-Arabism. Failure to achieve Arab unity following World War I did not quench the ardor for it as a nationalist goal. The establishment of the Arab League was hailed as an important step toward that end; but the League's failure to save Palestine from the Zionists again gave rise to a desire for a closer unity. The establishment of Israel, regarded as a threat to the Arab states, has aggravated this intense Pan-Arab feeling. Loyalty to the Pan-Arab ideal has made it difficult for Syria to make up its mind, in an Arab world divided into two camps, which of the two it should join, or whether it should join either. The new Constitution of 1950 has also been characterized as "spiritual" in that it requires religious teaching of all denominations and stresses ethical and spiritual values in life.[20] Relaxation in Government administration and wartime conditions have brought a noticeable deterioration in public morality not only in Syria but throughout the Arab world. The emphasis on religious and ethical values is partly to repair this decadence but probably more to create confidence in the new regime.

Finally, it is to be noted that the new Constitution is both extremely detailed in its provisions and rigid in the procedure of its amendment. Such provisions reflect the apprehension of the new group in power lest the elder politicians and vested interests

[20] See a lecture by the Rapporteur of the drafting committee, Dr. 'Abd al-Wahhab Hawmad, *Hawl al-dastur al-jadid* [*On the New Constitution*] (Damascus, 1950), pp. 8-9.

15: Khadduri S-4 (no date) 1951 MDl Syria MDl

work the administration to their advantage. But such detailed provisions are likely to call for frequent amendment under the rapid changes of modern life, while the procedure of amendment is difficult and discourages change. Certainly Syria needs to avoid further revolutionary change, but the new Constitution, with its detailed provisions and rigidity, has not adequately provided legal means for peaceful evolution.

The rapid changes in Syria's regimes during the last two years since Colonel Husni al-Za'im precipitated the first coup d'état are not an accidental phenomenon when considered in the light of Syria's constitutional development since World War I. These changes, however, have been accelerated and in certain respects rendered dangerous by the introduction of the Army into the play of political forces. The Army's declarations that its interference was merely to rid the country of an undesirable administration and to maintain the republican regime have been taken by the Syrian people only at their face value; and far-sighted Syrians as well as disinterested foreign observers are still gravely concerned about what the future will have in store for Syria if the Army continues to interfere in politics whenever the civilian leaders advocate policies which run contrary to the wishes of the military. Judging by the recent experiences of Iraq with a similar situation, it would seem that either the Army will eventually take full control of political activities or it must be crushed as a political force.

Closely connected with Syria's internal struggle between the Army and the civilian politicians is the division of the Arab world into two rival camps; Syria is inevitably, though perhaps unwillingly, drawn into the resultant conflict. Each of these two camps has aggravated Syria's internal changes by supporting certain influential politicians and parties, hoping to orientate Syria in its direction. This political struggle in the Arab world has raised such issues as that of monarchy and republicanism, and has intensified the struggle among ambitious politicians who advocated such plans as those of Greater Syria, a Syro-Iraqi dual monarchy, and general Arab collective security.

Syria's most urgent need, it seems, is a stable government; but this depends now less upon Syria itself than upon external inter-

15: Khadduri S-4 (no date) 1951 MDl Syria MDl

ference in its affairs. If left alone, Syria may still be able to solve the Army-civilian struggle for supreme authority which is essential for internal stability. If, however, foreign interference — direct or inspired — continues, the future of Syria will depend accordingly on the larger problem of the stability and social-economic reorganization of the whole Arab world.

29:Dunn S-4 (1952)1952 MI Middle East
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COTTON IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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—Photo Courtesy of Cotton Trade Journal

All the cotton in the Aleppo region is ginned at this modern ginning center in Aleppo. Large gins (some have 10 saw gin stands) are located or are under construction on each corner of the square. Buildings are elaborate and usually cost about twice as much as the machinery. The grounds are landscaped like a campus.

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inhabited for centuries until a few years ago when farmers from the cities began developing them with mechanical equipment. Large landlords from Aleppo spent millions of dollars installing pumps, building roads, and in other ways developing these lands.

Although occupancy rights have been recognized for years, various government officials with whom the matter was discussed were strong in their views that these newcomers are squatters and should be evicted. They want to distribute the land among the landless peasants. The landlords who have made investments here are just as determined that they will not be evicted. The political strength of the landlords is given generally as the reason for the statement recently made by the head of the government to the effect that the new law will be studied for revision.

While the question of eviction is being debated, the government is proceeding to parcel out other public domains in small units to landless peasants. As this program is expanded, the large landowners are becoming more and more concerned for fear their own properties will be expropriated and subdivided, as has been done in neighboring countries.

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This dispute over the use of public land illustrates the struggle for power going on in Syria today between government bureaucrats and wealthy landlords. The government on one hand is attempting to force changes in all phases of the economy through its various control programs. These changes, however, are strongly resisted by the landowners who prefer to be free from regulations and regimentation. The outcome of this struggle may have a material bearing on the trend in agriculture for the next several years.